P4QX-44

PH- FACTS & QUESTIONS FOR X-TALK

TEASER: *(teaser taken from sermon script page II, paragraph 4)* "MAN IS ILL-EQUIPPED TO LIVE ON EARTH IN HIS NATURAL STATE, BUT MANAGES TO GROW BECAUSE WE THRIVE ON THE GLOW OF ACHIEVEMENT WHICH COMES WHEN WE MASTER THE DIFFICULT."

FACTS:

1. The title of today's message is "Down a Crooked Mile" The scripture/gospel reading is from II Corintheans 12: 7-9

2. Dr. Mobley retired in 1981. Since his retirement he has had interim Pastorates in eleven Presbyterian Churches including 2nd pres. These interim positions were in eight different states and ten cities. A quote from Dr. Mobley's sermon regarding retirement: "Our plans for retirement also symbolize the dream of the flawless way of life. Some may realize the dream, but some find the brain stops working, wondering what to do with the hours, and feel totally useless. The remarks of a good friends father, Dr. Mc Henry brewer's stick in my mind. He said the only good thing about getting old was that he could turn off his hearing aid in church and not hear a thing the preacher said."

3. The sermon focuses on the fact there is not such a thing as a flawless life. Life does not come easy for most of us. But, human kind thrives on difficulties, it makes us stronger. In essence in order to achieve anything we must overcome.

LEAD IN LINE FOR ANNCR BY FEMALE ANNCR: THAT WAS "BE JOYFUL IN GOD" PERFORMED BY THE CHOIR OF 2ND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH UNDER THE DIRECTION OF W. LLOYD COLE.

NOW LET'S JOIN DON ELLIOT HEALD WITH TODAY'S SPEAKER, DR. HENRY MOBLEY, INTERIM PASTOR OF 2ND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN LOUISVILLE. DON, I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND DR. MOBLEY HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON.

SUGGESTED POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. Don's response should be to Sherrie that she's absolutely right. Than Don should direct his conversation to Henry Mobley be welcoming and than talking about what they have in common..."retirees that can't retire." Don might use some of the facts above to talk about Henry's twelve years of interim pastoring and ask him to talk about what it's like to be retired and Don can reiterate his own life as a retiree. The conversation needs to lead to "nothing comes easy...." we plan our life to end with the grandeur of R & R and it does not always turn out that way.

2. The above should lead to the fact that no life is a flawless one. Don might ask about coping with the flaws, the crooked paths of life. Henry can respond with the words used in the teaser, man is ill equipped to live on earth yet we thrive on being able to find ways to survive. Life is a challenge as we walk down a crooked mile.

CLOSING LINE FOR ANNCR: "DOWN A CROOKED MILE..." SOUNDS INTERESTING HENRY.

DON'T FORGET TO LISTEN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERMON FOR INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN RECEIVE A COMPLEMENTARY TRANSCRIPT OF "DOWN A CROOKED MILE.".

BEFORE DR. MOBLEY PRESENTS HIS MESSAGE, HERE IS THE 2ND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LOUISVILLE CHOIR WITH "GOD OF GRACE GOD OF GLORY."

PROTESTANT HOUR, #4

GIVE IT ALL

JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO

SCRIPTURE: MARK 10:17-27

"...GO, SELL WHAT YOU OWN, AND GIVE THE MONEY TO THE POOR... THEN COME, FOLLOW ME." MARK 10:21 (NRSV)

SOMEONE ONCE ASKED ERMA BOMBECK IF SHE SAVED UP GOOD IDEAS SO SHE'D BE ABLE TO WRITE AT LEAST ONE STRONG COLUMN PER WEEK.

SHE ANSWERED IN A COLUMN, "WHAT'S SAVED IS OFTEN LOST," WHICH, UNLIKELY AS IT IS, I PROPOSE AS A SECONDARY TEXT THIS MORNING.

MISS BOMBECK WROTE:

"I DON'T SAVE ANYTHING. MY POCKETS ARE EMPTY AT THE END OF A WEEK. SO IS MY GAS TANK. SO IS MY FILE OF IDEAS. I TROT OUT THE BEST I'VE GOT, AND COME THE

NEXT WEEK, I BARGAIN, WHIMPER, MAKE PROMISES, COWER AND THROW MYSELF ON THE MERCY OF THE ALMIGHTY FOR JUST THREE MORE COLUMNS IN EXCHANGE FOR CLEANING MY OVEN.

"I DIDN'T GET TO THIS POINT OVER-NIGHT. I CAME FROM A FAMILY OF SAVERS...

"THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, I'VE SEEN A FAIR NUMBER OF MY FAMILY WHO HAVE DIED LEAVING CANDLES THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN LIT, APPLIANCES THAT NEVER GOT OUT OF THE BOX ....

"IT GETS TO BE A HABIT.

"I HAVE LEARNED THAT SILVERWARE TARNISHES WHEN IT ISN'T USED, PERFUME TURNS TO ALCOHOL, CANDLES MELT IN THE ATTIC OVER THE SUMMER, AND IDEAS THAT ARE SAVED FOR A DRY WEEK OFTEN BECOME DATED.

"I ALWAYS HAD A DREAM THAT WHEN I AM ASKED TO GIVE AN ACCOUNTING OF MY LIFE TO A HIGHER COURT, IT WILL BE LIKE THIS: 'SO, EMPTY YOUR POCKETS. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT LEFT OF YOUR LIFE? ANY DREAMS THAT WERE UNFILLED? ANY UNUSED TALENT THAT WE GAVE YOU WHEN YOU WERE BORN THAT YOU STILL HAVE LEFT? ANY UNSAID COMPLIMENTS OR BITS OF LOVE THAT YOU HAVEN'T SPREAD AROUND?'

"AND, I WILL ANSWER, 'I'VE NOTHING TO RETURN. I SPENT EVERYTHING YOU GAVE ME. I'M AS NAKED AS THE DAY I WAS BORN.'"

ONE TIME A YOUNG MAN ASKED JESUS A SIMILAR QUESTION. HE IS, I THINK, ONE OF THE MOST AUTHENTIC CHARACTERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. I KNOW THIS YOUNG MAN - THIS FIRST CENTURY YOUNG URBAN PROFESSIONAL FROM JERUSALEM. HE'S HARD WORKING, SUCCESSFUL, RESPONSIBLE, VOLUNTEERS SOME

IN HIS SPARE TIME AND HE'S DOING WELL, VERY WELL FINANCIALLY. BUT THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING IN HIS LIFE, AN EMPTY RESTLESSNESS, SOMETHING T. S. ELIOT ONCE DESCRIBED IN A POEM - "WE ARE THE HOLLOW MEN," SOMETHING ARTHUR MILLER DESCRIBED SO POIGNANTLY IN DEATH OF A SALESMAN, SOMETHING ST. AUGUSTINE MEANT WHEN HE WROTE, "OUR HEARTS ARE RESTLESS UNTIL THEY REST IN THEE."

WHAT A MOMENT WHEN A WEALTHY YOUNG MAN RUNS UP TO JESUS, A POOR, ITINERATE RABBI, KNEELS BEFORE HIM AND ASKS, "GOOD TEACHER, WHAT MUST I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?" WHAT FOLLOWS IS INTRIGUING: "OBEY THE LAW," JESUS SAYS; "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS."

"I DO THAT," THE YOUNG MAN ANSWERS. "I'VE BEEN KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS ALL MY LIFE AND I'M STILL EMPTY."

JESUS LIKES THAT. THIS MAN'S WHOLESOME INNOCENCE, HONEST INQUISITIVENESS, COURAGEOUS VULNERABILITY, MAKE HIM A VERY WINSOME CHARACTER. HE HAS ALL THE PROMISE OF A TRULY GREAT ONE. ~~EVEN HIS RELIGION ASSURES HIM. HIS WEALTH IS EVIDENCE OF GOD'S BLESSING~~ SO, WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? WHY DOESN'T HE FEEL GOOD ABOUT HIMSELF? JESUS LOOKS AT HIM AGAIN, LOVES HIM AND SAYS, "YOU LACK ONE THING. GO, SELL WHAT YOU OWN, GIVE THE MONEY TO THE POOR, COME FOLLOW ME."

JESUS DOESN'T SAY THAT TO EVERYBODY BY THE WAY. IT IS HIS PRESCRIPTION FOR A PARTICULAR YOUNG MAN WHO, WHEN HE HEARS IT, IS SAD, THE TEXT SAYS. APPALLED IS MORE LIKE IT, DON'T YOU IMAGINE? SELL IT ALL - GIVE IT ALL? WHO COULD DO A THING LIKE THAT? MAYBE SOME OF IT; MAYBE MAKE A MAJOR, LEADERSHIP GIFT TO THE CAMPAIGN; MAYBE EVEN TITHE

TEN PERCENT OF THE INCOME FROM HIS INVESTMENTS, AFTER TAXES, OF COURSE. BUT SELL IT ALL? GIVE IT ALL? NO WAY.

THIS IS, FIRST OF ALL, ABOUT MONEY, A TOPIC ABOUT WHICH AMERICANS, PARTICULARLY, HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF AMBIGUITY. JACOB NEEDLEMAN IS A PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY AND HE HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ENTITLED MONEY AND THE MEANING OF LIFE WHICH HAS RECEIVED NATIONAL ATTENTION. HE WRITES:

"WE LIVE IN AN AFFLUENT SOCIETY. THIS MEANS NOT ONLY THAT WE HAVE MUCH MATERIAL WEALTH, BUT THAT WE WANT THIS WEALTH MORE THAN WE WANT EVERYTHING ELSE."

BUT, SAYS THIS PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, IT DOESN'T DO FOR US, WHAT WE WANT. IT DOESN'T MAKE US HAPPY OR FREE OR IMMORTAL OR EVEN CONTENT. IN FACT, HE PROPOSES THAT OUR DESIRE FOR MONEY IS

A KIND OF SELF-IMPOSED HELL. IN A CHAPTER ENTITLED, "THE NEW POVERTY: LIFE IN HELL," HE WRITES

"HELL IS THE STATE IN WHICH WE ARE BARRED FROM RECEIVING WHAT WE TRULY NEED BECAUSE OF THE VALUE WE GIVE TO WHAT WE MERELY WANT." [P. 27]

"SELL IT ALL. GIVE IT ALL." IT'S A KIND OF ULTIMATE COUNTER CULTURE MANDATE, IS IT NOT? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE ALL DID IT? WHAT ABOUT OUR OBLIGATIONS, OUR BILLS, OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES AND COLLEGES AND MUSEUMS? DOES JESUS ACTUALLY PROPOSE THAT WE EXERCISE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR FUTURE? FAMILIES? INSTITUTIONS? OR IS THIS JESUS' PRESCRIPTION FOR THIS YOUNG MAN ALONE? WHAT WOULD HIS PRESCRIPTION BE FOR YOU AND ME? WHAT WOULD HE TELL YOU AND ME THAT WE NEED TO DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL

LIFE (OR TO BE FULLY AND COMPLETELY ALIVE NOW?) WOULD IT NOT BE DIFFERENT FOR EACH OF US? WOULD HE NOT, WITH HIS MYSTERIOUS PRECISION, HIS SENSE OF THE CENTER, WOULD HE NOT IDENTIFY WHATEVER IT IS IN WHICH YOU AND I HAVE INVESTED OUR HOPES AND DREAMS, AND ARE COUNTING ON TO SAVE US; OUR CAREER, OUR SUCCESS, OUR INFLUENCE, OUR POWER, OUR PERSONAL APPEARANCE? WOULD HE NOT TELL US WHAT HE TOLD THAT WINSOME YOUNG MAN, NAMELY TO RELEASE OUR GRIP, TO OPEN OUR HANDS TO LET IT GO AND TO COME, FOLLOW.

THE WEALTHY YOUNG MAN WHO CAME TO JESUS ASKING ABOUT LIFE, IN A WAY, I THINK, REPRESENTS EVERYONE OF US. HE HAS SUCCEEDED PROFESSIONALLY, FINANCIALLY. IN ADDITION, HE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL RELIGIOUSLY. HE HAS DONE EVERYTHING HIS RELIGION TOLD HIM TO DO ALL HIS LIFE.

HE IS AT THE END OF THE LINE... HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO TO PRODUCE THE EXPERIENCE HE WANTS AND NEEDS. AND WHAT IS THAT? - SATISFACTION, WHOLENESS, ONENESS WITH THE WORLD, WITH HIS OWN LIFE, WITH GOD, A SENSE THAT HE'S LIVING HIS LIFE AS PURPOSEFULLY AND MEANINGFULLY AS HE CAN ...

THE RADICAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IS THAT WHAT WE TRULY NEED IS OFFERED TO US AS A GIFT ... GOD'S LOVE, GOD'S FORGIVENESS, GOD'S ACCEPTANCE.

THE RADICAL PERSONAL IMPLICATION, OF COURSE, IS THAT YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THE GIFT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE IT. I LOVE THE WAY BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR PUTS IT:

"YOU CANNOT ACCEPT GOD'S GIFT IF YOU HAVE NO SPARE HAND TO TAKE IT WITH. YOU CANNOT MAKE ROOM FOR IT IF YOUR ROOMS ARE ALREADY FULL. YOU CANNOT

FOLLOW IF YOU ARE NOT FREE TO GO." [OP. CIT., P. 125]

I CONFESS - I'M A SAVER ... I STILL HAVE MY CLASS NOTES FROM FRESHMAN GEOLOGY. SOMETIMES IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING A SERMON, I HAVE A COUPLE OF IDEAS THAT I THINK ARE SO GOOD I CAN'T WASTE THEM IN AUGUST WHEN THEY MIGHT WORK IN NOVEMBER. AND THEN I READ ANNIE DILLARD'S WONDERFUL LITTLE BOOK, <u>THE WRITING LIFE</u>, WHICH IS REALLY ABOUT LIVING LIFE. ANNIE DILLARD'S WORDS LEAPT OFF THE PAGE AND I HAVE COME TO THINK THAT THEY ARE PERHAPS THE MOST ELOQUENT COMMENTARY AROUND ON THE STORY OF THE WEALTHY YOUNG MAN IN MARK 10.

"ONE OF THE FEW THINGS I KNOW ABOUT WRITING IS THIS: SPEND IT ALL, RIGHT AWAY, EVERY TIME. DO NOT HOARD WHAT SEEMS GOOD FOR A LATER TIME IN THE BOOK, OR FOR ANOTHER BOOK: GIVE IT, GIVE IT

ALL, GIVE IT NOW. SOMETHING MORE WILL ARISE FOR LATER, SOMETHING BETTER. THESE THINGS FILL FROM BEHIND, FROM BENEATH, LIKE WELL WATER. ANYTHING YOU DO NOT GIVE FREELY AND ABUNDANTLY BECOMES LOST TO YOU. YOU OPEN YOUR SAFE AND FIND ASHES."

IN HIS POPULAR BOOK THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE, STEVEN COVEY TELLS ABOUT "THE MAN WHO ASKED ANOTHER, ON THE DEATH OF A MUTUAL FRIEND, 'HOW MUCH DID HE LEAVE?' HIS FRIEND RESPONDED, 'HE LEFT IT ALL.'" [P. 99]

YOU AND I REALLY DON'T OWN ANYTHING WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT. IN FACT, THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH WE ARE IN BONDAGE TO ANYTHING WE CANNOT GIVE AWAY. THAT IS WHAT JESUS SAW WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE EARNEST YOUNG MAN, AND THAT, I BELIEVE, IS THE PLACE WHERE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

CHRIST INTERSECTS MOST POWERFULLY WITH YOUR LIFE AND MINE.

THAT'S WHAT JESUS CHRIST CAME TO GIVE - THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE. IT IS A GIFT. YOU RECEIVE IT BY OPENING YOUR HANDS AND ASKING FOR IT. IT IS YOURS AS YOU RELEASE YOUR GRIP ON WHATEVER IT IS YOU ARE CLASPING SO TIGHTLY AND ALLOW GOD'S LOVE, GOD'S FORGIVENESS, GOD'S AMAZING GRACE TO FILL YOU.

YOU KNOW, FROM CHILDHOOD YOU AND I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO CLASP OUR HANDS TIGHTLY IN PRAYER - "CLOSE YOUR EYES, BOW YOUR HEAD, FOLD YOUR HANDS." AND THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THAT POSTURE THAT REFLECTS OUR MIND SET: CLOSED OFF FROM THE WORLD, HANDS NOT TOUCHING ANYTHING TO DISTRACT; HEAD LOWERED FROM THE LEVEL OF NORMAL INTERCOURSE WITH LIFE, A KIND OF PERSONAL SPIRITUAL CLOSET. THERE IS A MUCH OLDER CUSTOM, I

HAVE LEARNED, AND THAT IS TO BE IN A RECEPTIVE POSTURE AS YOU PRAY; EYES OPEN PERHAPS, HEAD UP, AND MOST OF ALL, HANDS OPEN. SOME PEOPLE EVEN LIFT THEIR HANDS IN A POSTURE OF RECEIVING AS THEY PRAY ... MOST OF US CAN'T BRING OURSELVES TO DO THAT. BUT WON'T YOU QUIETLY, SIMPLY, RELAX THE MUSCLES IN YOUR HANDS AND LET THEM BE OPEN, PALMS SLIGHTLY UP - LET GO OF WHATEVER YOU ARE SQUEEZING, HOLDING SO TIGHTLY, AND BE READY TO RECEIVE.

THE PROMISE, WHICH JESUS MADE TO HIS PERPLEXED FRIENDS, IS THAT THOUGH THE DEMAND TO GIVE IT ALL AWAY IS IMPOSSIBLE, WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, A LITTLE MORE SO, I THINK, WHEN OUR HANDS ARE OPEN.

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GREAT GOD OF LOVE, FOR ALL YOUR GIFTS, WE THANK YOU. FOR OUR RESOURCES, BE THEY GREAT OR MODEST, FOR THE LOVE OF FRIENDS AND FAMILIES, FOR THE COMMON GIFTS OF BEAUTY AND KINDNESS AND AFFECTION, WE THANK YOU. TEACH US TO OPEN OUR HANDS, TO RELEASE OUR GRIP, AND TO BE RECEPTIVE TO THE LOVE YOU HAVE FOR US, IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

PROTESTANT HOUR

SERMON #4 - SUMMARY

GIVE IT ALL

JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO

Scripture

Mark 10:17-27

"...go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor... then come, follow me." Mark 10:21 (NRSV)

Give it All is what Jesus told an affluent young man who one day asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus' answer is stunning. Sell all - give it away and come, follow me.

This sermon suggests that his prescription different for each of us and that we can't receive God's gift of life until we release our grip on whatever it is we are holding tightly.